

Rescuing Your Safety Committee: How to Get Results from Your Safety Program

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Today's Discussion

- **Can** be an excellent tool in a company's comprehensive Safety and Health Management System.
- Their value is that they often involve different levels of staff and delegate tasks among many people.
- Some are advisory; some are action-oriented – some are both.

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Required or Recommended??

- Many states have incentivized the use of them by offering insurance discounts:
 - FLA, LA – 2%
 - HI – 3%
 - PA, MN, NY – 5%
 - CO – 5-10%

*Each State also has specific criteria to receive and maintain the discount

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Required or Recommended??

- Some states require them:
 - MN – required if over 25 employees or certain high hazard issues
 - OR/WA – required if over 11 employees
 - MT – required if over 5 employees
 - NE – if required to have WC insurance
 - NC, NY – if EMR is over a specified number

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Safety Committees are Everywhere!!

This has led to a proliferation of Safety Committees.

Sometimes more is not better!!

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Safety Committee Concepts

- Safety Committees don't just **become** effective without proper planning and an understanding about how to establish guidelines that help ensure their success.
- And they don't **remain** effective without ongoing planning and hard work.



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Safety Committee Concepts

Your Safety Committee is a living, breathing organism that needs care, commitment and concern to grow and flourish.



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The Five Stages of Safety Committees

- Safety Committees often move through five different stages of growth and decline.
- If you already have a Safety Committee, figure out where you are and make some changes.
- If you are about to start one, learn from other's mistakes.

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The Five Stages

1. Getting the Mandate
2. Laying the Foundation
3. The Early Years
4. What Happened to Us?
5. Finally Getting it Right

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Getting the Mandate

- Mission Statement and Purpose
- Functions
- Support from Management
- Who Serves on the Committee?



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Getting the Mandate

Mission Statement and Purpose

- If it's not written.....
- If it has no connection to the company's mission.....
- Taxation without representation (aka authority without responsibility)
 - Can't make decisions or spend money

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Getting the Mandate

Minimum Functions

- Hazard identification
- Hazard mitigation
- Incident investigation
- Often:
 - Policy development, program review and evaluation, training

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Getting the Mandate

Support from Management

- \$\$\$
 - line item in the budget
 - procedures for spending
 - authority to spend
- Resources
 - regulations
 - training

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Getting the Mandate

Support from Management

- Time
 - For meetings and tasks
- Space/Access
 - Records
 - Injury data
- Authority to shut down an unsafe job or task?

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Membership Red Flags

- “Appointed” membership
- No rotation
- Who chairs the Committee?
 - Not the Safety Director – should be in an advisory position
- No attendance requirements
- Lopsided membership
- Too many or too few

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Membership Red Flags

- Membership should be viewed as a perk by employees and managers alike
- There should be a “fight” for the slot when an opening occurs on the Committee
- You may have to start out with some “bribes” to generate a buzz

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Laying the Foundation

- The first meeting
 - Essential to get off to a good start
- The first year
 - How will you evaluate your effectiveness?
 - How will you celebrate your successes? (and failures?)
 - Need to have it in writing

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Laying the Foundation

- Establishing goals
 - SMART objectives
 - Short term (< 3 months) and long term (6-12 months)
- Meeting rules
 - Start/end on time
 - Arrive on time
 - Everyone speaks/has something important to say

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The Early Years

- It's fun and exciting
- We're going to do soooooo much!!!
- We're in charge of safety – get out of our way
- We get out of work for an hour every month!!!



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What Happened to Us?

Lesson #1

A Safety Committee needs to take care of its members



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What Happened to Us?

- I'm too busy to come to a meeting.
- I'm complaining and I just can't stop.
- Don't look at me if you want a volunteer.
- She is such an *awful* Chair.
- We been talking about [*insert problem here*] for years!!!

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What Happened to Us?

Lesson #2


Safety Committee Members need to take care of themselves.



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What Happened to Us?

• Why does everyone hide when they see me coming?



• *I'm not in charge of safety!!*

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What Happened to Us?

Lesson #3

A Safety Committee needs to take care of its fellow co-workers.



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What Happened to Us?

- I didn't know we had a Safety Committee!!
- Why didn't they respond to my complaint/suggestion?
- Who do they think they are telling me what to do?



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Finally Getting it Right

- Remember that your Safety Committee is a work in progress
- Like a battery it will need to be recharged on a regular basis
- Members need to be rewarded for their efforts or they will stop trying
- Perception is reality

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Finally Getting it Right

Remember These Keys

- Mission Statement
- Authority and Responsibility
- A Plan of Action
- A Positive Reputation
- Leadership on all levels
- Two-way Communication

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